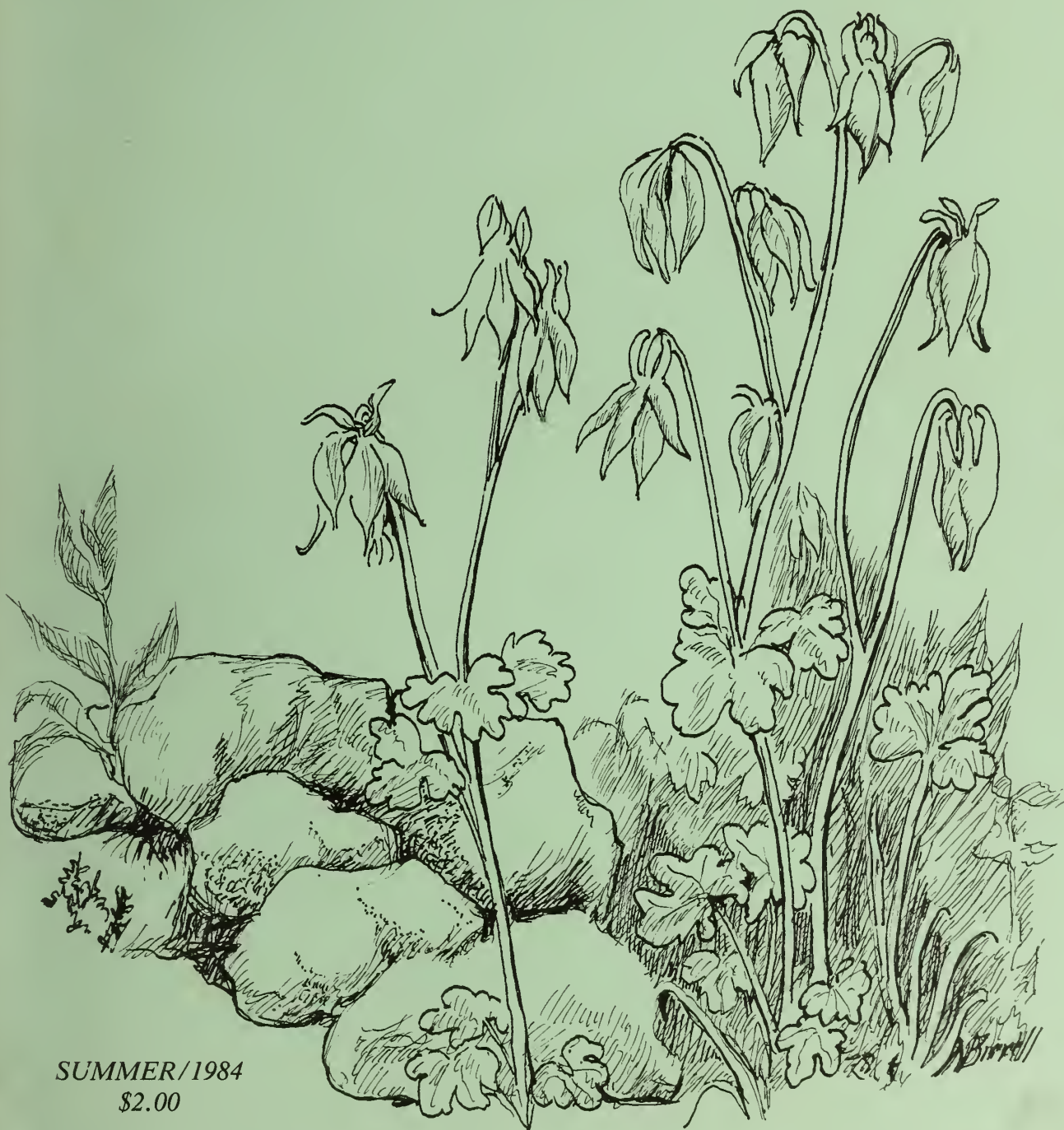


STONE WALLS



SUMMER/1984
\$2.00

Changes come to our hill towns in many forms. The general store, in one family for generations, changes hands. Friends and neighbors die or move away. Derelict houses are salvaged in the nick of time by someone with the energy, money, and know-how. Other old houses disintegrate and return to the earth. New houses seem to appear over night. And then there is the "Widening of the Road." Obviously our towns have survived an entire series of these construction projects from the first foot-paths to the present state mandated 32-foot "turnpikes," built to take the trailer trucks picking up and delivering to small businesses springing up everywhere. Each widening takes a bit more of our identity, making one village pretty much like the next. Gone is the feeling that, as you approached the next hamlet, you were traveling the spoke to the hub. What we have left are wide places in the Road. Since there seems precious little we can do about it, the best thing appears to be to accept the changes with grace and humor, but not ever forgetting the lost woods and quiet down back.

I remember my older relatives in their Dr. Locke shoes looking for all the world as if they'd gotten stuck in another era — hair-styles, spectacles, shoes, and all. Recently I realized that I, too, am stuck . . . somewhere in the 1940's. Maybe we serve a purpose. In our stubborn resistance to change, we blend the eras into one another, and hold back the headlong rush of progress so that others may see back as well as ahead.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Several summers ago we on the editorial board of Stone Walls wrote about our gardens. I wrote about the wild spot in my yard into which might be introduced the kind of plants which could shift for themselves. One of our readers and contributors, Helen Scott of Chester responded by sending an envelope in which were columbine seeds. Now my wild garden is graced by these tall stalks which divide space in a kind of gothic reminder of soaring stone arches in contrast to the down to earth stone wall in the wild garden.

NATALIE BIRRELL

STONE WALLS

Box 85

Huntington, Massachusetts 01050

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Worthington His Soc

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Making Hay

An Interview With Welcome Meacham
by Lucy Conant



Haymaking is an essential farm activity particularly in areas like New England where livestock must be housed and fed during the long winters. Grass grows luxuriantly in the hilltowns due to the heavy soils and relatively cool summer temperatures. But making good quality hay takes skill, effort, and machinery as well as cooperation from the weather.

In the Chester area Mr. Welcome Meacham is known for making excellent hay. His fields are trim and beautiful, yet in 1939 when he and his wife bought an abandoned farm on Chester Hill those same fields were growing up to brush, were full of rocks and had old apple and spruce trees growing throughout the area.

Mr. Meacham, who grew up on a farm in Blandford, said he has been making hay ever since he was old enough to handle a pitch fork. He began cutting grass with a scythe when he was ten or twelve years old. He has liked haying the best of the many jobs on a farm.

Mr. Meacham has always been a part-time farmer. He retired from working at the Strathmore Paper Company in Woronoco in 1973, but while working at the mill he and his wife farmed, first in Russell, then in Chester. He had a herd of dairy cattle until 1965, then two months later he bought some Herefords and raised beef cattle until 1974. Since then he has concentrated on making and selling hay.



All during this time he has cleared land, cutting trees for fire wood, having a bulldozer get out rocks and stumps, liming and fertilizing the soil, and gradually the woods and overgrown fields became lush grasslands. Mr. Meacham said that he kept working on it a little at a time, adding to the size of the fields every year. In the late 1940's he bought an additional thirty acres that adjoined his farm and began clearing those fields. When he first began making hay, he used a one horse mowing machine, often cutting grass in the evening since he worked during the daytime. When dry, the hay was loaded by hand onto a wagon and brought into the barn for unloading and storage.

Mr. Meacham bought his first tractor in 1944 and gradually added more equipment. He was the first farmer on Chester Hill to buy a hay baler in 1951 and with his son, Edward, helped to bale hay at a number of neighboring farms. He bought his present hay baler in 1961, a John Deere, which is still running well twenty three years later. In 1966 he first bought a mower conditioner and feels that it saves from one to two days in drying the hay

so that it can be baled. When the grass is cut, it goes through rollers on the machine and is crimped and conditioned before falling to the ground. Also the cut grass is left fluffed up so that the sun and air can dry it better. If the weather conditions are just right, even with heavy hay, with use of the conditioner the grass can be cut one day and the hay baled late on the second day.

Mr. Meacham doesn't begin mowing until the dew is off the grass. If he mowed in the morning, later that day he would ted the cut grass with a tedder which picks it up and scatters it, and then later rake it into windrows. The next day he would turn over the windrows with the rake, sometimes doing it twice, and then the hay would be ready for baling. Mr. Meacham feels it is important to pick up the hay bales and get them into the barn the same day. He doesn't like to leave the bales outdoors overnight. He also keeps all his equipment under cover and would never leave his baler out at night.

He likes to begin making hay around June 10th so that the haying season is well under way by mid June. Timothy grass

needs to be cut as soon as it heads out, or it quickly loses its protein value. During the haying season, Mr. Meacham watches the weather reports carefully. One of the traditional weather sayings which he finds reliable is that no dew in the morning is a good sign of rain later in the day. He cuts only as much hay as he can handle and then as he says, he takes care of it.

It is crucial to have the hay adequately dry before baling. Mr. Meacham has a favorite pitchfork which he takes with him when he walks around the field to check the hay. He sticks the fork into the windrow and if the fork goes through the hay easily, then he knows it is time to get out the baler. He doesn't have to feel the hay as most people do. Also when Mr. Meacham rakes the hay, he watches the windrow from the tractor and can tell if there are any green or damp spots.

The hardest part of haying is picking up the bales and putting them on the truck, then unloading and storing them in the barn. The newer balers will kick the freshly tied bales of hay onto a trailer



towed behind the baler. Mr. Meacham feels that storing the hay bales with the cut edges of the hay facing up helps to cure the hay. If the bales are stacked into the barn tightly and interlocked, they won't fall down. Then the barn doors and windows are left open to provide good ventilation, and in four weeks or so, the hay is cured and ready to feed. Freshly made hay can give horses colic.

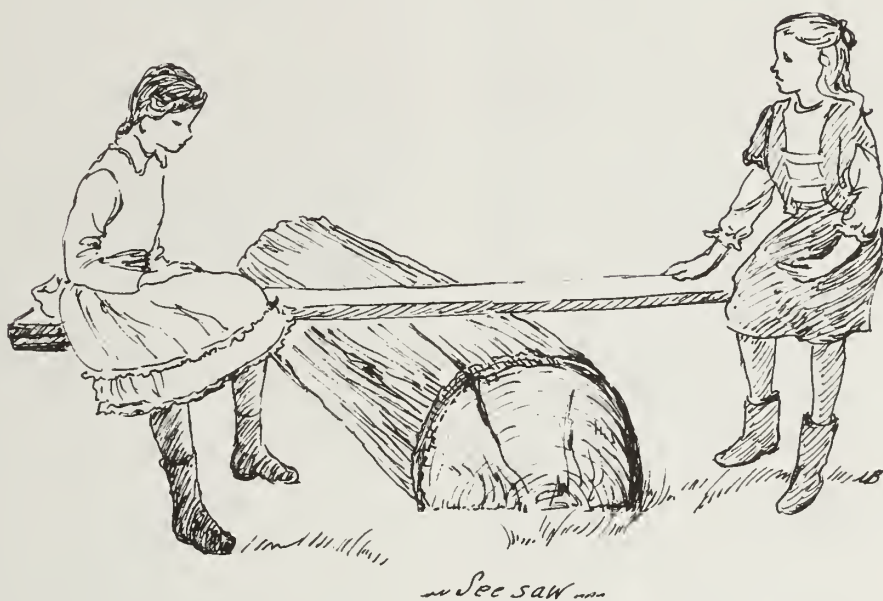
Mr. Meacham began selling hay in 1965 after he sold his dairy herd. Some of his first customers are still buying hay from him today. With a grin he says their biggest complaint is that his hay bales are too heavy. He estimates that one hundred bales will weigh 2½ tons, which means that the average bale weighs about fifty pounds. Presently he mows 32 acres on his own farm and nine acres on a field which he leases. One year he had three hundred bales left over, otherwise he has sold out every year from the two cuttings of hay he makes from these fields.

First his son, then his son's wife, and later his grandsons have helped out with the haying. It has been a real family affair. His youngest grandson now likes to



drive the tractor and is good at it, according to his grandfather. Mr. Meacham makes hay because his land is good natural grassland, even though some of it is quite wet, and because he likes to hay. He says

he looks forward to the haying season every year and always has, even when he was a boy cutting grass by hand with a scythe.



*A young tree stands
At the side of the to-be-widened road.
It's raining
And the leaves of the tree,
Very green,
Radiate an innocent hope.
Very orange surveyors' tape
Is tied to a branch,
And the very orange "CUT"
Is marked on the trunk.*

Diana Nunley, age 16

Growing Up On Jacob's Ladder

Excerpts from book written by Shirley Phelps Bruso

About 1925 my grandfather, George Phelps and his wife, Eva, along with Charles Canedy, built a souvenir store, tower, and gas station at the Summit, Jacob's Ladder in Becket, Berkshire County, Massachusetts. In 1927 Charles Canedy died and my grandparents continued the business. Cabins were built later. My parents, Ruth and Clifton Phelps, went to work there. My brother Clifton (called Sonny) was born in 1924. I was born in 1929, my sister Nancy in 1931, and my sister Jean in 1932. We girls and Sonny spent our summers at Jacob's Ladder and in 1936 our family moved there to live year round and I started first grade in Chester. We lived there until my family sold the store in 1946 and I was sixteen and a junior in high school.

In 1925, soon after my grandfather went to the Summit, he and Uncle Harry built an observation tower out of pine logs. The tower stood about fifty feet high. Pa strung lights around the top and around the first landing. I heard a story that Sonny, when about three, had to be rescued from the first landing as he sat up there with his legs dangling down. People paid 10¢ to walk up the tower but sometimes Jack, our good-natured hound dog, would lay on the landing and people were afraid to come down. A big telescope, which swiveled for the convenience of the viewers, rested on the top landing. Sometimes walking up the tower, I'd be scared going

up the last two flights of stairs.

A rock pile was in front of the gas station until my grandfather moved it across the street directly opposite the store. He cemented the rocks together and behind the rock pile he put up a flagpole. The flag always flew at the Top O' Jacob's Ladder. Tourists who stopped at the store wrote on the rock pile. They came back years later to see if their names were still there!

One rock had the year 1910 painted on it, representing the date when the road and the rock pile were first built. East of the rock pile on the same side of the road sat a big tan-colored rock with a metal plaque embedded on the front, put there sometime by the Massachusetts Highway Commission. It was four feet high.

Cottages were built east of the store — one "Big Cottage" and two "Little Cottages." About 1930, "B.B. Cottage" and the "Last Cottage" were built west of the dirt road. During the summer we girls lived in the "Last Cottage" along with Marion, Fred, and Margaret. Up the dirt road my father and Fred built "Little Cottage" in 1940. Marion and Fred lived there for a while.

The store sold all sorts of souvenirs, some of which were imprinted with "Jacob's Ladder."

Postcards of Jacob's Ladder were sold and I am making a collection of them. I have fifty, but hope to collect many more.

I am also collecting Jacob's Ladder souvenirs, not easy to find, but when you think of the thousands sold, I know that somewhere there must be many plates which say "Souvenir of Jacob's Ladder" and many silk pillows with long fringe and with a picture and Jacob's Ladder stamped on it, just waiting for me to find them.

Stone Wall Editor's Note:

May we recommend that you read Ms. Bruso's book *Growing Up On Jacob's Ladder*. It sells in some local stores for \$5.95, or may be ordered direct from the author. If ordering direct send \$5.95 plus \$2.00 for handling and postage to: Ms. Shirley Phelps Bruso, 6508-103rd St., Court East, Puyallup, Wash. 98373.

on the loose &

*wondering through Summer's fields;
unwinding with & following
her floral-skirted streams,
again (as in my childhood dreams)
i find in her remedies
for disenchanting schemes.*

*for (of things joyful-bountiful)
she is at once a faithful friend
& a healer of the soul:
here, pastoral symphonies
of susans, asters, buttercups
with steeplebush & chickory
to amplify the score;
there, a wealth of purple flag
& a scented bank of mallow rose
with turtleheads & tiger lilies
coloring the shore.*

*yet wonderful as Summer is
& marvelous to roam,
at the close of every wonder day
in you i find Love's best bouquets
& thankfully (more than flowers say)
within your heart, i'm home.*

c j blake

BEFORE THE STORM

*Crickets hushed by sudden feet,
Fireflies competing,
Bullbats sweeping stardust
from the evening, fleeting,
Barefoot through eternity,
legs and skirts awry,
Sprawled atop a heaving earth,
beneath a tipsy sky.*

Alberta C. White



BY-LAWS

OF THE

BLANDFORD MINING CO.

ORGANIZED JAN. 15, 1880.

TOGETHER WITH A

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE DISCOVERY, HISTORY
AND LOCATION OF THE MINE.

SPRINGFIELD, MASS
WEAVER, SHIPMAN AND COMPANY, PRINTERS.
1880.

THE BLANDFORD

GOLD AND SILVER MINING COMPANY,

Organized January 15, 1880,

Under the Laws of the State of Connecticut.

OFFICERS:

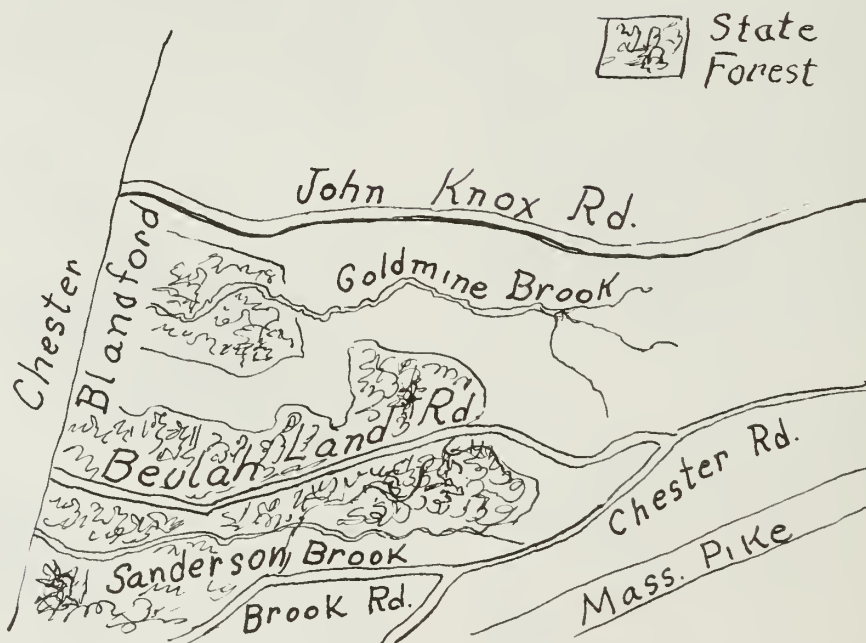
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The Search For Blandford's Lost Gold Mine

by Barbara McCorkindale

Anyone who has grown up in Blandford during the past thirty or forty years can tell stories about the lost gold mine. One tale often repeated concerns an old gentleman who lived during the 1700's and who quite by accident discovered a deposit of gold and silver. He told some friends about it and promised to lead them to the spot. However, on the day appointed, as the gentleman led his friends through the forest, a terrible storm arose, and they were forced to turn back. The old man took this as a sign from the Lord and never more returned to the site of his discovery. Another story that is often told in town concerns a working gold mine that was in operation around the turn of the century. For some reason the shaft was sunk through the bed of a brook, thus necessitating a constant pumping to eliminate water every time a miner went down to dig. According to this story, the mine produced nothing of any value except for a single nugget that was smuggled out in the pocket of one of the miners. The first story is doubtless based on one found in Sumner Gilbert Wood's book *ULSTER SCOTS AND BLANDFORD SCOUTS* (see p. 268). The source of the second story cannot be pinpointed, at least at this time.

Chances are, also, that anyone who lived his teen years in Blandford has been on at least one expedition searching for this legendary mine. There are a few clues to

its location, the prime one probably being Gold Mine Brook, so named, everyone presumes, due to its proximity to the diggings. But Nature takes a dim view of Man's poking and prodding, and in a few short decades, bushes, vines and trees can quite thoroughly camouflage even the most garish disfigurement of the landscape. The Chester-Blandford area, in what is now largely state forest land, was once the site of many different kinds of excavations; there were mica mines and quartz and feldspar quarries, to name just a few. Although several of these have come to light, the gold mine has so far eluded the seekers.

The question might well be asked, "Was there ever *really* a gold mine in Blandford?" The answer to that is a definite "Yes!" It is a strange story which contains the elements of a classic mystery, even including ghosts — well, at least *one* ghost! The first solid evidence to prove the existence of the Blandford Gold Mine lies in the Porter Memorial Library in Blandford. It consists of a small booklet entitled "By-Laws of the Blandford Mining Co."; it was printed in Springfield in 1880. This pamphlet also includes a list of officers and directors and "A Brief Account of the Discovery, History and Location of the Mine." The reader can judge for himself how vaguely the location is described in the following:

In the early summer of 1873, some gentlemen of leisure residing in Springfield, made a trip among the hills and valleys of Chester and Blandford, and in their rambles came across a rock (where the mine is now located), and broke off a piece of it and took it home to show to a few persons acquainted with minerals and mining. Without hesitation, they told them that if it came from California, they should say that it was a good indication of silver or gold. After a few days of hesitation, they concluded to see if there was anything valuable there; and, if so, try and obtain it. Leasing the land and continuing excavations, they soon struck a wall rock; and, as they went deeper, began to find specimens of mineral ores, which they exhibited to several geologists — among them Prof. Manes of New Haven, Ct., who pronounced them good; said that such specimens indicated a near approach to a rich vein of gold or silver. When at the depth of about twenty feet, finding a handsome piece of rock, and not knowing whether it contained anything of value, they submitted it to an assayer, who found it to contain \$19.98 in gold and 16 ounces of silver per ton of 2,000 pounds. When at the depth of ten feet more, another assay was made, showing increased richness of the ore.

With this encouragement, they took in other associates, and pushed forward with greater vigor. From time to time other assays were made, resulting in still richer specimens of the finest gold and silver. The shaft is now one hundred and eight feet deep, and those having charge of the mine think they have uncapped a rich vein, mostly of silver — but as much worth in gold as silver — as the last six inches contained several pieces of silver quartz, as

large as a large native walnut, so free from stone that they could be hammered down like lead, without breaking; and they are unanimous in thinking that all that is wanted to make it a paying mine is machinery, etc., to put it in running order. The company has purchased the land — which was first leased — about two hundred acres, and now have full control. Beside the mine, there are some thirty or forty acres of Feldspar and Vitreous Quartz, and that of itself is quite valuable. There are some other minerals also which have not been tested enough to be mentioned.

Following the above explanation is a list of assays from three different companies, one in New York, one in Newburyport, Mass., and one in New Haven, Conn. All testify to the fact that the ore from the mine contains substantial amounts of gold and silver. This little booklet appears to have been designed to attract investors into the company, and for this reason it paints a rosy picture. We can only wonder if it was successful; there are no clues to tell us if any investors came forward.

The next solid evidence as to the existence of the gold mine is found in a series of newspaper articles published in the Springfield Daily Republican during the year of 1877. The first one, dated April 2, introduces us to the gold mine — and to its resident ghost:

The true story of the Blandford gold mining operation is told in a communication to the Republican this morning. A company of Springfield Spiritualists, who have already laid out several thousand dollars and just bought 200 acres of land, claim to be working entirely under the spiritual guidance of "Old Hill," a Cali-

fornia veteran. Those who have seen the shaft at Blandford doubt somewhat the practical mining skill of the ex-Hill, but he seems to be a benevolently inclined spirit, who predicts that the faithful are to reap a fortune out of his mine and directs that they share it liberally with the poor. It may be said in favor of "Old



Hill," too, that he knows a good thing when he sees it, as he specially directed that the statement of his mining speculation should first appear in the Springfield Republican. Yet we doubt if Almoner Bartlett and Manager Osgood of the new relief association get any immediate funds from the Blandford hills mining company, and, as for the miners, they have shown an ability to live on their faith in the good things to come . . .

It is clear from his tone that the reporter who wrote the above article was poking fun at the Blandford gold mine venture. Spiritualism, which had quite a large number of followers in the late 1800's, was sometimes ridiculed in the press. This next item, taken from the Springfield Republican of April 21, 1877, shows much the same cynical attitude:

C. I. Leonard of this city, one of the company of spiritualists and miners who are digging for gold at Blandford under the spiritual direction of "Old Hill," an ex-California miner, has a word for those who would discourage the delving faithful and others who propose enlisting with them. As Mr. Leonard could not of personal knowledge testify that the first assay of gold in the ore, reputed to yield about \$2,000 per ton, was taken from the Blandford hills, Spirit Hill has directed the second assay of one taken by Leonard from the mine. This, Mr. Leonard testifies, has been done as follows, Prof. Richards of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology testifying to the correctness of the assay: "This paper certifies 89 2/10 grains of gold-bearing quartz handed by you to me have been smelted at the laboratory of the Institute of Technology and

yielded a globule of gold weighing 5 63/100 grains, which is at the rate of 1839 ounces 96 grains per ton of 2,000 pounds, or \$37,887.52 per ton, calling gold worth \$20.60 per ounce."

On Saturday, May 5, 1877, a small news item appears which, although not about the gold mine, refers indirectly to it. In speaking of a projected porcelain factory, the article states: "The Chester mica mine and extensive feldspar quarry . . . lies [sic] very near the Blandford line and close to the gold mine which the spiritualists are working under the direction of "Old Hill." This certainly would seem to help place the location of the elusive gold mine!

Another small item in the May 17, 1877, newspaper simply lets us know that the work continues at the diggings: "The Blandford gold miners have shown their faith by their works, for President Leonard of this city went to Russell with tools and new machinery yesterday to begin work for the summer. Big results are expected."

At this point we may well ask, "Why did President Leonard go to Russell with his tools if the gold mine was in Blandford?"

A good question! Or is it a clue? Was the mine perhaps somewhere near the Russell town line? And doesn't this contradict the apparent clue in the May 5th article which seems to pinpoint the location as near to Chester? These are more good questions!

From May until August, the old newspapers make no mention of the gold mine. But on August 17 an article appears in which the previously condescending tone of the reporter has changed to one of some respect. The article even has a headline. It reads thus:

BLANDFORD'S UNDERGROUND TREASURES

The miners of Blandford, who began their work, it will be remembered, under the direction of spirits, have struck "pay gravel" at a depth of 108 feet, much of the distance being through the hardest rock, and have suspended operations to put in machinery for the more extended working of the vein and crushing of the ores. The specimens of the ore used for assay, C. I. Leonard of this city says, were taken at random by himself, who has no practical knowledge of ores, and were submitted to Prof. Robert H. Richards of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. By his assay, the yield of precious metals per ton is \$929 of gold and \$774 of silver, a total of \$1703. The vein is quite narrow at present, but the projectors expect it to widen as they progress, when they will start lateral shafts.

It would appear that as of August, 1877, the gold mine was doing well and the miners were on their way to making a fortune; but a search of the newspapers from this date through August 8, 1877, has failed so far to reveal any more informa-

tion about the subject. Since the pamphlet containing the by-laws of the mining company was printed in 1880, it can be safely assumed that gold and silver were being produced at least up until that time. But here the trail grows cold and the searcher is left with a series of questions. Did the seemingly lucrative find prove to be only a small vein which became quickly exhausted and thus was abandoned? Did the miners lose faith in the venture — and in their ghostly leader — and gradually drift away? Or did Old Hill himself, in a fit of anger at his followers' lack of charity for the poor (which, as may be recalled, was one of his original stipulations), smite them with his ghostly power and make the whole mine, machinery, tools and all, disappear one day in a puff of smoke?

Perhaps someone reading this may know of another clue besides those mentioned here and will be able to renew the search with favorable results. There is an aura of romance about a lost gold mine, and even if the gold is no longer there, the person who finds its former location may count himself a successful explorer!



100 Years Ago In The Hill Towns

by Barbara McCorkindale

When the July temperature soars to the 90-degree mark in the Western Massachusetts valleys, there is no nicer place to be than sitting in the shade of a large maple tree on the lawn of a house in Blandford — or Granville — or Montgomery — or any one of the Berkshire Hill Towns! People have known about this for over a century and the area long ago earned a reputation as a good place to go on vacation. In browsing through the *Springfield Republican* of one hundred years ago, the reader is struck with the importance of this region. The newspapers of that time carried what we would call their classified ads on the front page, and between July 1 and July 5 of 1884 the following items appeared under the heading "Summer Resorts" smack dab on page one:

To Let—In Blandford, Mass., the noted Summer Resort, a furnished home of 12 rooms with large garden, ice, barn and shed room, etc., for \$75 for three months more or less. House is pleasantly situated, with piazza and shade trees in front, on main road, few minutes walk from post-office. Two stages daily. Inquire or address

Luther C. Nye
Easthampton, Mass.

Claflin House, Becket, Mass.—Situated on the Boston and Albany Railroad, 35 miles from Springfield. Elevation 1200 feet. Accommodations for 50 guests. Unsurpassed for health, pleasure and comfort. \$7 to \$10. City reference. For descriptive circular, address

A. G. Cross, Proprietor

Good board can be had in a quiet, healthy, pleasant place at \$5 per week by addressing

Mrs. W. Tinker
Otis, Mass.

The Mountain House, Blandford, Mass., as a summer resort is so well known in Springfield and vicinity as to need no further reference than its general reputation. For terms address

A. P. Chapin, Prop'r.

Chapin House
Westfield or Mountain House,
Blandford, Mass.

Wanted—At a quiet farm house in Berkshire, one mile from B. & A. R.R. station, a few summer boarders. Families or elderly persons preferred. Address

Olive C. Coates
Becket, Mass.

In case we are wondering if any of these ads bore fruit, our curiosity can be partially satisfied by the following news item of July 29, 1884:

Blandford is filling its houses with summer guests, although the families taking boarders this season are not as many as formerly. Luther Nye's house is rented to Mr. Keough of Holyoke, who, with his family, is occupying the place for the season. F. M. Bugbee's family of this city [Chicopee] are located at Mr. Tobey's, where are also Mrs. Draper and daughters of Salem, mother and sisters of druggist W. P. Draper of this city. Mrs. Flagg and family of New York, Mrs. Deeths and Miss Deeths of Little Falls, N.Y., and Mrs. Pierce and son of Cambridgeport are at Mrs. Robinson's. Prof. Loomis of Yale College is trying Blandford air again this summer.

On July 14 an item appeared letting the reader know how the resort business was faring in the town of Montgomery:

Atwater Moore's house has been enlarged and improved considerably since last season and is filling up quite rapidly with summer boarders.

It sounds as though the summer of 1884 was a pleasant and serene one in the Hill

Towns. The persons who had chosen to spend their vacation time there may well have congratulated themselves on being away from the valley if they had read the following item which appeared in the July 5 newspaper, commenting on events in Westfield:

The evening before the Fourth was the noisiest ever known in Westfield. It seemed as though every man, woman, and child was on the streets, provided with tin horns and blowing them with all their lungs. One prominent politician even furnished every boy with a horn who did not have one. But one good result was that nearly all the participants were exhausted by midnight, so that people had a chance to catch some sleep, which has hardly been possible in previous years, when the noise would not begin until the clock struck 12.

Yes, our ancestors knew a good vacation place when they saw it. Although today with our sophisticated modes of transportation, people may choose to go to more remote and exotic places — such as the Swiss Alps or Prince Edward Island — it is still true that on a hot July day there is no nicer place to be than in the shade of that large maple tree in Blandford — or Granville — or Montgomery — . . .



Genealogical Queries

CLARA BLAIR—born in Hartford, Conn., 26 Aug., 1830, married Mr. Gardner of Knightville, Dec. 1857. Thirteen months after marriage he died. In 1872 she married David Blair of South Worthington, she 42, he 53. Blair was born in Blandford, Ma., died in 1879. Clara taught school in Chicopee and is buried in Norwich Bridge Cemetery, Huntington, her marker reads 1830-1913. Any information concerning Clara's first husband would be most appreciated.

GARDNER—Descendants of Reuben and Sarah (Hunt) Gardner sought int. exp. Abington, Mass. Feb. 1774. Lived in Worthington, Mass. Children: Cynthia (perhaps married Amos Moore), Isaiah, Polly, Reuben, Seth and Susannah. Reuben (father) died in Worthington, Ma. 1831.

Mrs. Anne Gardner
590 Sunset Drive
Hendersonville, N.C. 28739

LEWIS JOHNSON—born April 1, 1837 in Russell, Ma., son of Corydon and Marie (Williams), he died in Springfield, Mass. Jan. 25, 1890. His wife was Jennie?. Was she from Russell? Did they have children? Would like to correspond with descendants or anyone having information on this family. He had brothers Marion, William, Jasper, and a sister Maria.

Mrs. Grace Wheeler
Worthington Rd.
Huntington, Ma. 01050

LEVI DEWEY—Born 1/28/1764 at Westfield, died 4/30/1827 at Meadville, Pa. Married Mary Scott, born 5/6/1770, died 12/24/1836 at Meadville. They had nine children, all born in Huntington; Ann, 1794; Susan, 1796; David, 1798; Justin, 1800; Stillman, 1802; Amanda, 1804; Mary, 1808; Sarah, 1811. Would like to correspond with anyone having information on any of the above.

Mrs. Janet Pamp
The Schoolhouse
107 Granite St.
Rockport, Ma. 01966



Send all Queries for fall issue not later than July 15. Mail direct to:

Mrs. Grace Wheeler
430 Worthington Rd.
Huntington, Ma. 01050

Our Barge Canal

by Carl E. Walker

Looking back from our situation today, with its planes, trucks, superhighways, Conrail trains, and automobiles, a canal which made it possible for a boat to travel from Long Island Sound at New Haven to the Connecticut River at Northampton and back in a week, operated only seasonally, and existed only a few years may seem a pretty futile venture. Add to that the fact that it lost money, and a lot of it, and it may seem that some of the suckers caught in it were human. It may interest us now only as a curiosity — as something long ago obsolete, brought down from the attic for a conversation piece. It is not impossible that those who invested in it and were assessed three times their original cost before they were done with it, and who stood at Westfield Basin watching the hulks of boats rotting there, figured that it was a big mistake.

Hindsight is not always better than foresight in placing a value on something done when things were different, or in judging a football play on Monday. Maybe it looked different to those who lived here in 1820. Can we turn off the television and imagine living in that year?

In 1820 we are no longer settlers. The Pilgrims landed two hundred years ago, and we haven't feared Indians in our lifetime, most of us. The low lands are established communities. Westfield was incorporated one hundred and fifty years ago. The United States is forty years old, and

we have recently, since 1812, proved that we can stand equal to the nations of the world on land and sea. The hill towns are settled, too, and thriving. Roads now connect from here to about anywhere, at least in good weather. A team can usually make it to Springfield and back in a day, or maybe two, with almost half a ton of goods. The Connecticut River has works around the rapids at Windsor and Hadley so that barges can bring up merchandise which only coastal places with harbors have been able to get; and those along the river can sell things they grow or make and don't need for themselves. So far we've been mostly self sufficient. We've grown what we needed or could trade with our neighbors. We've had United States money for about thirty years, but it's easier to get most of the extra things by barter. Those who don't support themselves farming, like grist and saw mill owners, storekeepers, doctors, ministers, teachers, and lawyers, get paid in kind mostly. We live in good tight houses, some of them pretty large. Seems those who have done well show it in fancy houses, matched teams of horses and such, but they earned it — most of them.

We have problems. The days of spinning and weaving our own cloth and all that are not entirely over, but we wear mostly store bought clothes or make them from store bought cloth. We rather envy those who live near the ocean and the

things they get from overseas, even China. Then, too, we could raise more than we need if we could get it to market, and we could have mills. We do have a foundry, powder mills, and do some manufacturing, but transportation is a problem. We can get where we want to go, usually, either with our own carriages or by stage coach, but it's pretty rough sometimes.

The merchants in coastal cities have problems, too. They have the goods and could get more, if they could get them to their customers inland. Peddlars' carts don't help a place like New Haven compete with, say, Hartford and its river traffic. Bulk goods particularly are hard to come by unless you are near water, but rivers are where nature put them. You can't make a river.

Or can you? They've been doing it in Europe for some time with canals. One is being built now from Lake Erie to the Hudson River, so they are planning to connect the Great Lakes with New York City and the Atlantic Ocean. James Hillhouse and other New Haven men think there is a chance of making one up through Connecticut and maybe Massachusetts, and Sam Hinkley of Westfield has been talking with them. There are some pretty level-headed people who believe that it would work. It seems pretty wild to think of freight barges going up and down our hills, but it sure would change our way of living if it could be done. There's no end to how we could develop. Who knows, this could be the way to travel from now on, and the way to open up the whole country to commerce.

These men didn't just talk about it. In 1822 Mr. Hillhouse and his associates obtained a charter from the Connecticut General Assembly for a canal from New Haven

through Farmington to the state line in Granby; and early in 1823 Mr. Hinkley and others got one from the Massachusetts legislature to connect with it, and continue through Westfield to Northampton and the Connecticut River. They even planned to make the river passable to the Passumpsic and on by St. Johnsbury, then down Barton River to Lake Memphremagog to the St. Francois and the St. Lawrence! Dreamers they were not. They believed firmly that water was the key to growth, and this country was ready to grow.

So two companies were formed. The Farmington Canal Company was to build and operate the Connecticut section, and the Hampshire and Hampden Canal Company was to do the same in Massachusetts. An assistant engineer on the Erie, David Hurd, was secured, and he, with his brother Jarvis, proceeded to survey the most acceptable route. The cost was estimated at \$290,000, to be paid by sale of 2000 shares in the two companies. The Hurds and Mr. Thomas Sheldon, the principal contractor, took 731 shares. Almost all of the offering was subscribed, but unfortunately when it came to paying up, receipts fell short of expectations. Towns along the route took some of the shares. The Massachusetts Court appropriated only \$600. In any case they went ahead. Appraisers appointed by the court of Hampshire County established the amounts to be paid to those whose lands the canal would pass through. The legal ads laying out the takings were published in the *Hampshire Gazette* and Westfield's *Hampden Register*, a copy of which may be seen in the county records at Northampton. They were not as definite in description as would be needed now, but were complete enough so that the route could be plotted on to-

day's maps.

The work that had to be done before actual construction could start took time. I wonder how long it would take today to secure all the permits necessary to build a structure eighty miles long, through two states and fourteen towns, changing the course and using water from every stream along the way; releasing the overflow miles from its source, cutting across every road, and taking fill, from wherever suitable material could be found, to wherever it was needed, including clay, to line the entire structure. What an environmental impact that would be!

Also there was the job of finding men, horse drawn scoops, horses and/or oxen, artisans to build bridges and aqueducts, and all the tools and equipment needed. Immigrants, particularly from Ireland, were persuaded to come to this country through the then wide-open doors. And all without disrupting the normal and essential business of the area. Buildings were needed directly or indirectly for the canal traffic or its construction. The laborers and animals had to be housed and fed. There can't have been much unemployment.

The preliminary work was done. On July 4, 1825 about 3000 people from both states came together in Granby to celebrate turning the first earth. Speeches and prayers in the center of town were followed by a two-mile walk to the site of the first excavation. Governor Oliver Wolcott of Connecticut turned the first spade (and broke it) as part of the festivities, and everyone had a wonderful time.

In November of 1826 the work of construction really started, after four years of preparation. The work had been carefully planned, and progressed as rapidly as could be hoped. One factor, and an important

one throughout the life of the canal, was the fact that those who were involved in Connecticut River traffic (the "Riverites") tried actively, including night-time sabotage, to impede progress. New England weather was not always helpful.

Whatever the difficulties, they were overcome, and on November 1, 1829 the *General Sheldon*, a packet almost 75 feet long, was launched in Westfield's basin. Another time of celebration included a trip, with about two hundred fifty aboard, north across the river to Still Pond and return. Then on December ninth, this boat left the Port of Westfield and floated through the locks to Southwick Ponds, now Congamond Lakes, by midnight, and continued on, arriving at New Haven about 10 P.M. on the 10th. The canal was in operation, after four years of planning and three of working.

It was almost six more years, however, to the time when, on July 20, 1835, the *Northampton* was towed through the final locks into the Connecticut River, and ceremoniously dumped water from the ocean at New Haven into the river. At that time the two canal companies, now insolvent, reorganized as the New Haven and Northampton Canal Company, which operated the entire project for the rest of its life.

There are parts of the old canal which are still clearly evident. Locating them and perhaps following them may prove interesting. In Massachusetts (and this paper about "Our Canal" concerns chiefly the Massachusetts section) the big ditch begins where the old New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad crossed the state line. Very soon it left the railroad, turning right and entering South Pond it followed the west shore to Middle Pond, where it shifts to the east shore for about 1000 feet to the

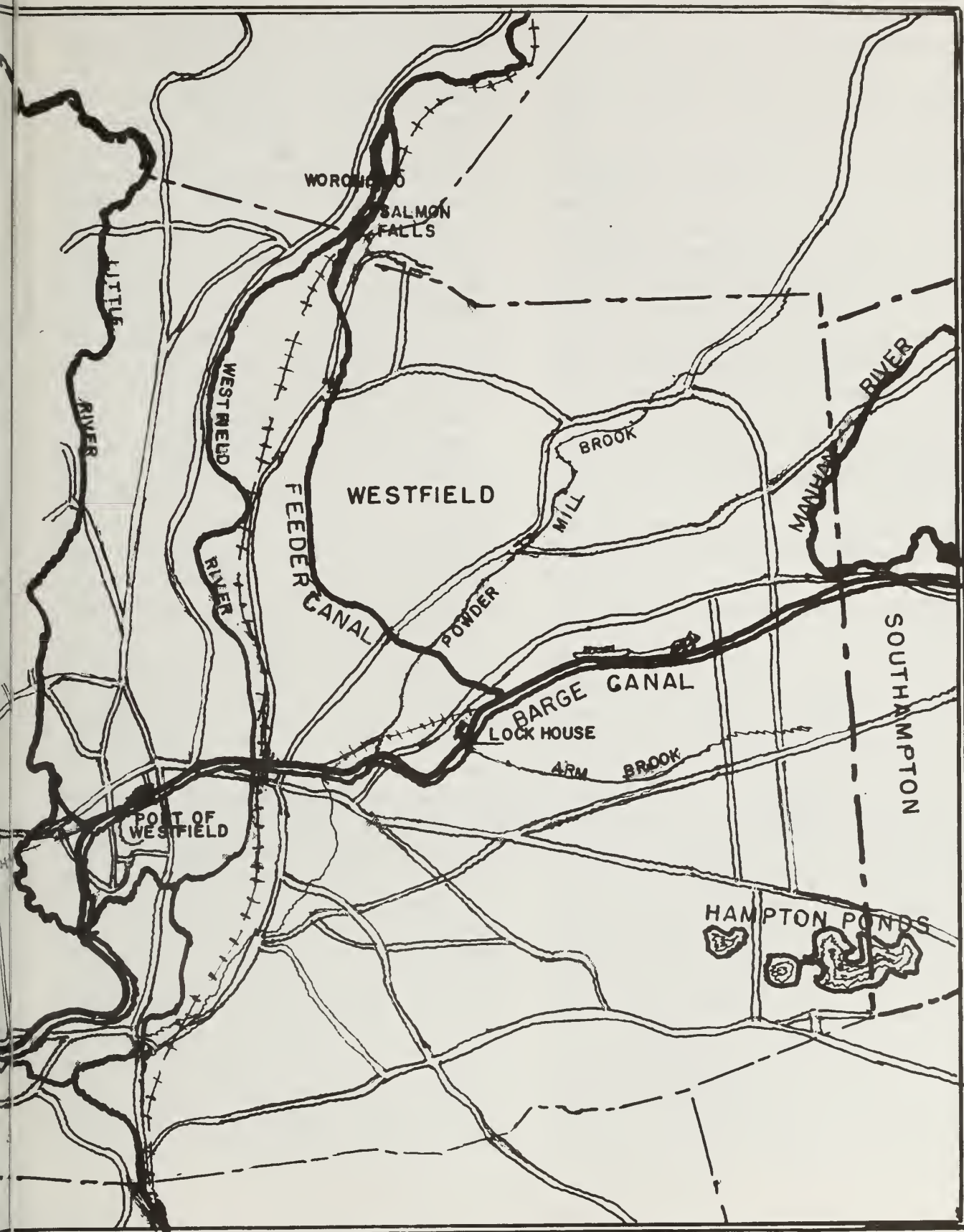
ROUTE OF THE NEW HAVEN & NORTHAMPTON CANAL THROUGH HAMPDEN COUNTY

1840 - 1845

1 Inch = 1 Mile

WITH ROADS AS THEY WERE BACK THEN





end of the promontory. This was the start of a 700 foot pontoon bridge across to the other side of the pond. Boats then continued up the west shore, cutting across two points of land to North Pond. It then followed the east shore to a point, and then back to the west shore and left the ponds. It was here that the lock house stood until 1955. It runs then west of Great Brook almost to the gas pipeline, where it crosses the brook and continues, crossing route 57 near Brookside. It then follows generally along Great Brook to the West Springfield wells and into Westfield. The West Springfield water pipe follows the old canal across Laro Road and Canal Drive, and across Great Brook beside the Shaker Road. From this point, the bed of the canal is easily followed, for it has been used as a road for access to several properties between it and the brook. It crosses the Springfield water pipe line at the site of Ensign's Mill, long gone, and the West Springfield water main leaves at this point. Two hundred yards farther the canal crossed Shaker Road and we lose it for a stretch, and will not find it again until we reach the junction of Ridgecrest Drive and Little River Road. Behind the houses on the left (west) side of the road, along the foot of Munger Hill, or the "W" as it used to be called, the bed is easy to follow for three quarters of a mile to Little River. There are only a few spots where it remains through the tobacco land and behind the Columbia bicycle plant. One remaining piece of ditch is at the end of Gold Street just north of the siding to Columbia. From this point the present railroad is built on the old right of way through town, across the Westfield River and through the freight yard. Here the canal veered to the right, crossed Notre Dame Street and entered

Still Pond, then followed up Arm Brook under the present Arm Brook dam and pond. Floods and construction have practically obliterated it through the pond, but from a point near the head of Arm Brook Pond, the canal is again clear through the site of the last locks, behind the lock house and to the present railroad near Rural Gas site. From here through the Hamptons the railroad largely follows the right of way but is visible at a few points. In Northampton it is, I believe, lost. There was a basin south of the Mill River aqueduct, after which it ran just west of South Street and along the foot of the hill, across route 5 and down to the Connecticut River.

The canal as we see it today, along the foot of the hill behind the shopping centers on East Main Street, Westfield, for instance, is impressive. It is quite a ditch. It has, however, filled in considerably since its heyday. Original specifications called for it to be twenty feet wide at the bottom, with sides sloping so that it was about 35 feet wide at the surface of the water. Banks were about 10 feet high, with a tow path ten feet wide on one side, and the bank on the other side at least seven feet wide. The banks on the tow path side were to be not less than two nor more than five feet above the water, for efficient use of the towing teams. The depth of the water varied, partly by washing the banks, but must have been five or six feet. The boats, empty, drew three feet and loaded, four feet. The filled areas had to be well tamped, and the whole was lined with impervious clay. There were spillways or gates to dispose of excess water, and breaks where feeders or brook water entered. Docking and harbor areas utilized ponds where possible. I believe that there were two basins constructed in the Massachusetts section,

Aside from the main waterway, feeders were built to bring water from some of the main streams into the canal. There were very good reasons why water rarely came in directly. The amount of water entering or leaving had to be controlled. It was just as important not to have too much water and wash out the banks as to have too little, stranding the boats. Also, water was needed at the high points, not the valleys where the rivers were. The high sections not only had to be filled with water, but the locks going each way had to be filled and refilled in order for them to operate, and that water had to come from the heights. In some cases this was no problem. The highest point in the Southwick-Granby section was Congamond Lakes, which furnished plenty of water. The only way to get enough water to the Hampton Plains section, however, was from the Westfield River. To do this, a feeder 4 miles long was built from Salmon Falls,

-23-

in what is now Woronoco, down through the Pochassic country, passing through what is now the Sportsman's Club pond, and on through the Turnpike Industrial Park to the canal, about 500 feet north of the Lockhouse Road railroad crossing. Most of this feeder from West Road to Montgomery Road can still be followed, and shorter sections in other places. A second feeder brought in Little River water from the former Brush Dam, west of the Strathmore Paper Company buildings, along the present railroad siding, to enter the canal behind Westfield Woodworking. This feeder still carried water through the Foster Machine buildings until 1955, when the floods washed out the dam and changed the course of the river.

In addition to the construction of these waterways, many other structures were needed. Every road that was crossed had to be bridged, and roads relocated if necessary. Where the road had to cross at grade level, drawbridges were constructed which could be raised by ropes and winches to let the boats through. At the larger streams, wooden troughs lined with clay and large enough to float a boat were made, supported by stone piers and abutments. The one over the Farmington River was the largest, almost 300 feet long. Part of the abutment at the east side of Little River, beyond Main Line Drive, may still be seen, but most of them, like the locks, have been washed out or replaced by railroad bridges. Another feature was a pontoon bridge 700 feet long across Middle Congamond Lake, near its southerly end, which was used as the tow path when the boats crossed from the Suffield to the Southwick shores.

Then there were the locks, by means of which the boats were raised or lowered

where the elevation of the land changed. These were massive, 80 feet long, 14 feet wide and about 16 feet high, for they raised the boats ten feet. The size of the locks determined the largest size of boats using the canal, and a good many of them were built 74 feet long and 11½ wide for that reason. Some of the locks had stone sides with mortar, but that was mostly clay rather than the mortar we now use. I believe that most of the locks had earth sides, for in walking areas where there definitely were locks I have seen only a wooden timber or so, which was probably the bed timber of a gate. While most of the wooden parts would have disappeared long ago, it would seem that some stone work would still be visible. We see stone cellar holes often enough. The gates were heavy wooden door-like structures, hinged at the shores, and each side extending half way across the opening; each gate being made of two halves, meeting in the middle of the lock. They were angled slightly up stream, so that the pressure of the water would keep them tightly closed. Heavy sweeps, across the top of each and extending across the banks, were pushed by manpower to open or close them. At the head of each series of locks was a lockhouse where the lock tender lived. The one at the end of North Congamond went out with the remains of the first lock in the 1955 flood, but the one at the south end of Hampton Plains, beside the Lockhouse Road and opposite Rural Gas, is still there and lived in.

As a boat approached a series of locks, the captain would blow the long tin horn, which they all carried, to call the lock tender. For example, let's say, the boat was being towed south on Hampton Plains and about to descend to Westfield. The

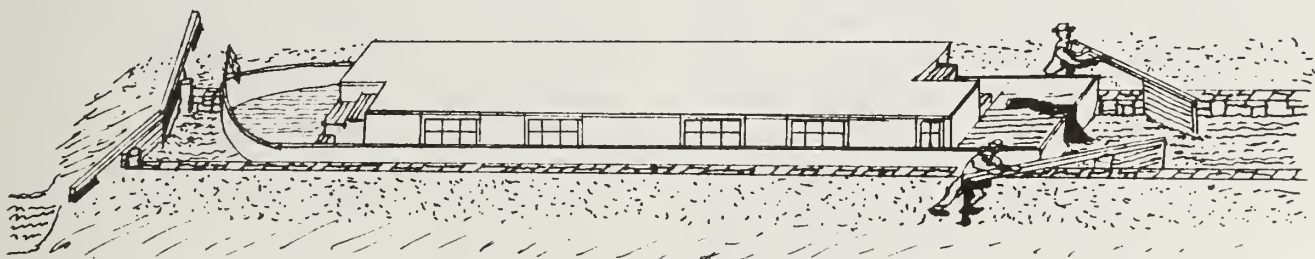
first lock would probably be full of water, and the upstream gate open, so the boat could float into the lock. The upstream gate would then be closed and the downstream one cracked open just enough to let the water out slowly. Opening it too fast would let the water rush out, washing the banks and sluicing the boat. As the water eased out and downstream, the boat was lowered until it was even with the next stretch of canal. The gate would then be opened wide and the boat proceed to the next lock, where the same thing would be repeated. Raising a boat would be done by reversing this procedure. It seems unlikely that one man could operate those gates. They must have taken some effort and had to be worked from both sides of the lock. Probably the boat crew helped, while the captain may have been visiting with the cook!

There were sixty locks in all, thirty two of which were in Massachusetts. From Congamond to Westfield valley there were nine locks, lowering the boats from elevation 225 feet above sea level to 140. At the other end of the valley, another nine locks raised them to 230 feet along Hampton

Plains. Then another nine lowered them to Northampton, and five more brought them down to the river. Most of the Connecticut locks were needed to raise boats the 225 feet to Congamond. The Connecticut River at the end of the canal was 97 feet higher than the basin at New Haven.

There was also much work along the route: building inns, warehouses, roads, docks, stores and whatever else was needed to handle the traffic and take care of new opportunities expected to develop with the opening of this prodigious undertaking. One place where they still stand is in Southampton, just west of the railroad crossing on Route 10. Beside the track can be seen some stone work, the remains of a lock. On the south side of the tracks is a building which was a warehouse, and on the north an inn. Everybody must have been pretty busy, to put it mildly.

The canal would have been of little use if there had been no boats. They too had to be built, for there were few, if any, available. They were stubby, slow, and built low, for they couldn't go any faster than the teams could tow them. They floated in only a few feet of water and had



A boat has entered the lock, with the downstream gates closed to hold the water level with the canal behind it. The lock tender and one of the crew are closing the upstream gates to keep the water from the main canal out of the lock. Then the downstream gates will be opened enough to let the water in the lock out into the lower canal slowly, lowering the boat about ten feet to the level of the next stretch of canal. When the downstream gates are opened, the boat can proceed at the lower level to the next lock.

to pass under low bridges, and they had to fit in the locks. With these limitations boats were built to have as much floor area, to carry as much cargo or as many passengers as possible. With locks 80 feet between gates, and allowing six feet for the gates to open and close, the longest they could be was 74 feet. Since those locks were 14 feet wide, the largest boats were 11½. Power was limited to teams of horses or mules. To be sure, steam boats had been built and at least one experimental steam craft was tried out on our canal. It had a shaft sticking out of the stern above the waterline, fitted with a spiral flange which was to push the boat through the water as a screw turns into wood. Perhaps it stirred up the water too much and washed the banks; anyhow it failed.

There were different types of boats. Some were purely for pleasure, and might take parties from the Port of Westfield to Southwick Ponds for a day's outing. They were comparatively small and fancy. For the most part, two types were used. One was purely for cargo — the barges, and the other — the packets, equipped for passengers but made to carry some freight or baggage also. Both had practically the same hull. There were small decks about 8 feet by 10 at each end, above the water line. The bow was blunt and the sides vertical, the bottom almost flat with almost no keel. The floor was perhaps two feet above the keel, and the roof about eight feet above that. A typical barge had a small cabin at the rear for the crew, about ten feet square, with a very small "rest room," a stove, and fold-away bunks. The rest of the hull was open space, about forty by ten feet, for cargo. The packets were something else! Except for the two

fore and aft decks, the packet was roofed, with doors and stairs for the passengers. In good weather, and except when they had to scramble down when approaching a low bridge, the passengers often preferred the roof to the rather cramped cabins. Packets had two cabins equally small, the forward one for women and the aft one for men, each equipped with a small toilet room. The middle area was available for passengers or cargo as needed. There were folding bunks on the walls of each cabin, though it seems that most travelers preferred to spend nights at inns along the way. Meals were served, and we are told the food was good. Competition between boats led to quarters as comfortable and pleasant as the limited space would allow. One account told of thirty women and a few children sleeping in a cabin ten by ten feet square; and a famous writer wondered what the little shelves were for until he found he was to sleep on one! Believe it or not! The cabins, especially those for women, were brightly painted and comfortably furnished. There were cooking facilities and a bar, either in the men's cabin or the center area. Water they had, plenty of it, dipped from the canal, used, and returned to the canal for the use of the next boat. Outside they were typically painted maroon, with a white stripe a foot wide around the entire hull. The bottom of this line was along the surface of the water when the boat was empty. I believe that this stripe served an important purpose in loading cargo aboard, for when this stripe was down in the water all the way around, the freight was evenly distributed and that was all the boat should hold. Twenty five tons would lower the largest barge a foot in the water, and that was actually about the maximum recorded load.

These boats drew three feet of water empty, and settling more than four feet could have resulted in hitting bottom in shallow spots.

A model of the largest canal packet is on display in the Westfield Athenaeum. It is not a reproduction of any actual boat, but I made it to illustrate a ship which could have used the canal, and to show how one could have been constructed. It does follow the descriptions we have of real boats. The women's cabin is larger than they usually were, as the biggest problem in designing it was arranging doors and stairs to be practical. Features such as lamps and the clothes of the crew and passengers were researched at Sturbridge Village.

The crew of such a ship consisted usually of a captain and three or four men. The captain commonly stood on the after deck and manned the tiller or sweep, with a man who stood on the forward deck holding a long pole which he used to fend the bow away from the bank. There would also be one or two men to cook, tend bar, serve passengers, or handle cargo and whatever else was needed, and someone to lead the towing team. The crew would be the same for a packet or barge; for serving passengers and stowing cargo would require about the same manpower, though likely different types of men.

So now we have a waterway with water in it, and boats to use its eighty miles of newly opened country. It is now 1835, we have reorganized and are ready to roll. We have been doing business part way since 1829, but now for the first time we can look forward to a full season for the whole distance. People would rather travel by our boats than by stage. The ride is smooth, you can move around, be sociable, sit down to a meal and generally do what pleases

you. The larger boats can accommodate thirty people comfortably, and more if needed. Merchants are starting to depend on the canal for their wares, and facilities are there along the route for trans-shipping goods both ways. We are in business. Packets made two trips a week regularly from Westfield to New Haven. The fare was \$2.25; \$3.75 with meals and overnight lodging. Single meals were 25¢. The trip for the full distance and back took a week. There were about eighty craft operating, making approximately 600 trips a season, and carrying upwards of 15,000 tons of cargo. Perhaps the 14,177 tons logged in 1841 was the best year.

The products carried show as well as anything the importance of the venture to the region. Going south, some of the cargo was wood, lumber, shingles, wool, hides, wheat, pork, cheese, potatoes, charcoal, and perhaps a little cider. Coming north — COAL, FURNITURE, FRUIT, FISH (especially salt cod), molasses, metals (like tin), and more than a little rum. Things like sugar, salt and cloth had been available before but were now easier to get, and for some things, more kinds to choose from.

Still, the canal did not succeed. The fees were set by the Legislature and they never covered expenses. Loss of water by natural causes — muskrats, breaching, and inevitable leaks, was made worse by outright sabotage. Farmers whose lands were flooded had to be paid, and loss of water meant delayed shipping. In spite of gates and other means of controlling water intake, spring freshets and heavy rains caused damage. Locks and other structures had to be maintained. Still, somehow or other, the proprietors kept going; the financial affairs were not by any means all

in the red. Shippers made money, merchants made money; those who lived within the area served by the canal sold their products and the economy expanded. It seems that everybody was benefitted except the ones who worked so hard to make it possible — and quite likely they were some of the merchants and others who profited directly. So, while the waterway did not live up to the hopes of those people who believed this to be the way of the future, the country prospered because of it.

It may well be that the canal men were not displeased when in the 1840's practical railroads were built. Here was a means of travel year round that could carry seemingly unlimited amounts of goods, and did

not have as many problems. Whether reluctantly or with a sigh of relief, they realized that the railroads were coming and would replace water in most cases. So the proprietors applied for an amendment to their charters for the construction of a railroad, largely along the right of way of the existing canal. 1847 was the last season for canal operations, for by the next year the southern section was already filled in and railroad cars, not boats, were using it.

The ghosts of the New Haven and Northampton Canal Company may be chortling now, as sections of the Canal Line are abandoned. The best laid plans of mice and men . . .

In the feeder from Salmon Falls to the main canal, this aqueduct carried water over Moose Meadow Brook in the Pochassic area.



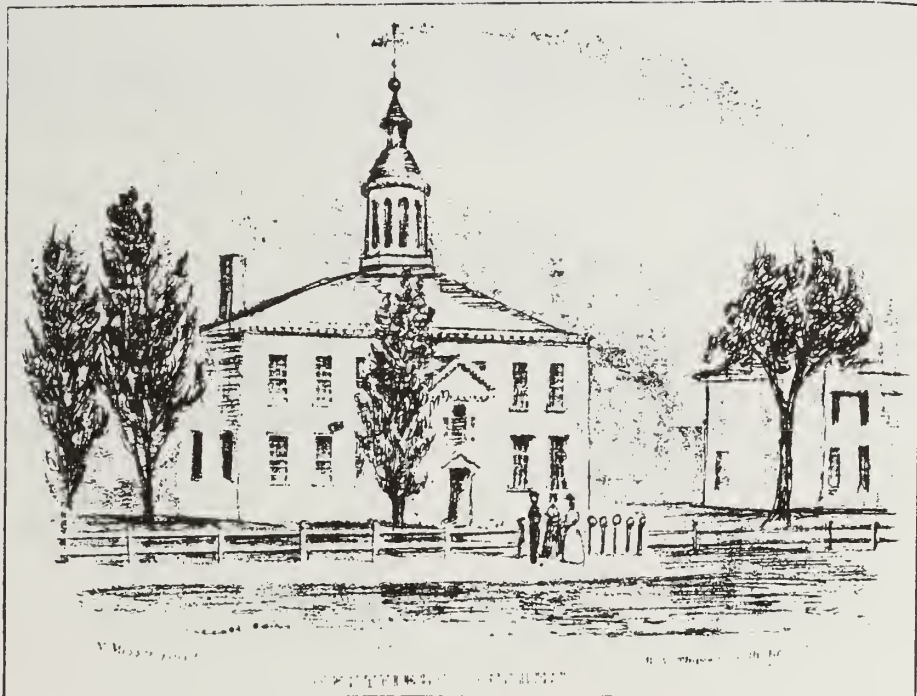
The Old Westfield Academy

by Ellen Corliss
Westfield High School, '86

People might wonder, upon finding that the Westfield High School opened in 1855, what kind of education existed for young people before that time. Before Westfield High School came into existence, there was the Westfield Academy, a kind of school fairly common in early times in this state.

The first academy in Massachusetts was the Dummer Academy in Newbury which was chartered in 1783. Applying for its

charter in 1793, Westfield was the seventh town in the state to form an academy. In January, 1800, under the leadership of Peter Starr from Middlebury, Vermont, the school opened its doors. It was opened to both young men and young women on a tuition basis. Operated under the direction of a Board of Trustees, fifteen in number, the academy was given a committee of three from this Board to assist the preceptor.



THE ORIGINAL ACADEMY BUILDING.

From a rare print kindly furnished by Mrs. Jennie A. P. Bates Greenough.

The original Board of Trustees, as listed by Dr. John H. Lockwood, Westfield's best-known historian, was as follows: Hon. Samuel Fowler, Hon. William Shepard, Samuel Mather, David Mosely, Abel Whitney, and Col. James Taylor, all of Westfield; Jonathan Judd, Jr., of Southampton; Justin Ely and Rev. Joseph Lathrop of West Springfield; Rev. Solomon Williams and Hon. Samuel Lyman of Northampton; Rev. Bezaleel Howard of Springfield; Rev. Isaac Clinton of Southwick, and Rev. Joseph Badger of Blandford. This list contains only fourteen names, but in a report on a meeting of the Board of Trustees, Rev. Lockwood mentions that Rev. Noah Atwater of Westfield was in attendance, so it appears that he must have been the fifteenth member. The students who attended the academy were basically from Massachusetts, but there were some from Connecticut and New York.

The original wooden building stood on land purchased from Aaron King on Broad Street and served the institution until 1859. Later it was moved back on the lot and made the rear part of a new brick building which was erected directly in front of it.

The most successful time of the academy appears to have been about 1833. In this year the faculty numbered eight full-time teachers and four student assistants. The enrollment included 186 young men and 255 young women. From this time on, the numbers gradually decreased, and by the close of the Civil War, the institution had reached its lowest point.

The Westfield School Committee pointed out that the academy was not a real substitute for a secondary school such as the Boston English High School, since it was not maintained by the town, nor in the charge of the town, nor was it conducted for the sole benefit of its inhabitants. In 1855 the first Westfield High School came into existence.

In June of 1866 Dr. Emerson Davis, President of the Board of Trustees, and a member of the School Committee, died, and the future of the academy came into question. There was a proposal that year that the high school and the academy be combined, but this was ruled out as impractical. In the following year the town purchased the academy building for the sum of \$35,000. The high school was immediately moved into the building, and the academy ceased to function as a school.

Although Westfield Academy is long gone, it still serves a useful purpose in the education of young people. When the school was closed, some money remained. This was put into a special fund known as the Academy Fund and was placed at the disposal of the Principal of Westfield High School. This money frequently pays for little extras that might otherwise go begging, since there is no money in the school budget for them. For example, at one time when one of the teachers wanted to introduce a course in public speaking and no money was available for textbooks, the Academy Fund was tapped and a new course came into existence. The old building may be gone, but the spirit of the Westfield Academy lives on!

A Reminiscence of Leaning Rock (and the Devil's Armchair)

by Jane Haring Gaitenby
Norwich Hill, Huntington



As far back as my grandmother* could remember, and long before, a favorite swimming and picnicking spot in Knightville was in the gorge just below the site of the present Knightville Dam, on the east bank of the Westfield River in Huntington. A gigantic rock, really a part of the east bank, called Leaning Rock (which is still there) towered over a deep and narrow part of the river where the swimming was fine — for good swimmers. On the north side of that rock was a small rocky seat-like formation that some referred to as the Devil's Armchair.

*Mabel Hatch Haring, whose father, Francis L. Hatch, was born in Worthington.

Out near the road nearby stood the old empty schoolhouse which had closed around 1930, perhaps at the same time that the North Hall School closed. Between it and Leaning Rock there was a fine stand of old hemlocks with their roots planted in and around ledges. A few of the hemlocks are still there. On the other side of the river the continuation of the strata that produced the ledges could be plainly seen.

In the middle of the rather fast-moving river (too fast for swimming after a good rain) were two other immense rocks, lying on their sides but protruding above the surface of the water. The northern one had a sizable pot-hole just above the water's customary level, and one could sit in the

pot-hole, with legs dangling in the water, after swimming across to it. (Some people considered that pot-hole to be the Devil's Armchair.)

The depth of the water, as I recall, was normally at least fifteen feet near these rocks. Exploring swimmers would take big stones from the river's edge and use them as sinkers to carry their bodies down to the cobbled bottom. Without the extra weight of a stone, a child-sized swimmer would be carried downstream to shallower water by the current.

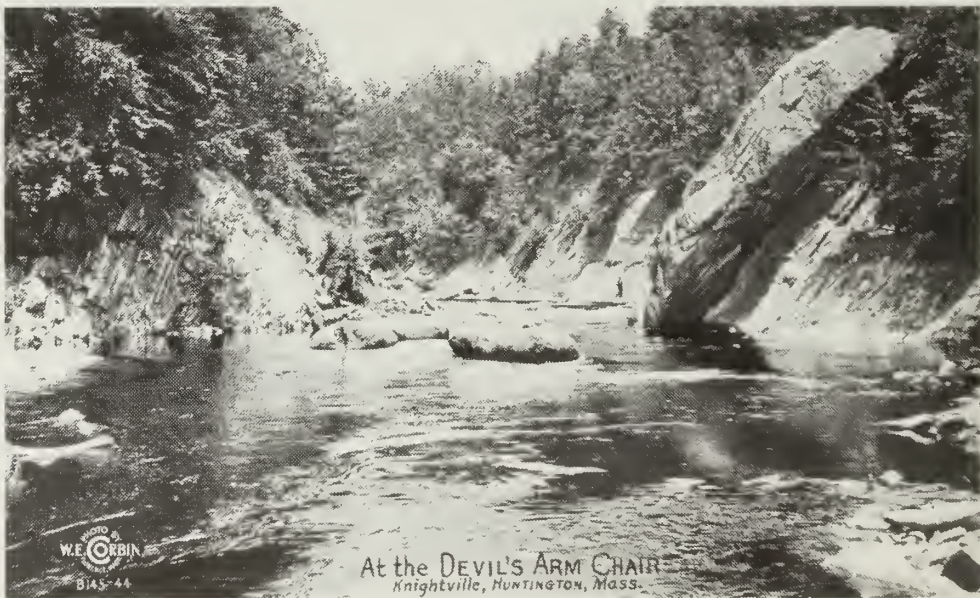
There was a spooky labyrinth formed by the abutment of the two large mid-river rocks below the surface, about eight feet down. Occasionally a daredevil surface-dived and slithered through that dark, underwater passage. Very scary! I did it once. I was a kid, and nervy!

Only at mid-day was the bottom clearly visible, because both sides of the river were (and are) very steep at Leaning Rock. The tall trees on top of the cliffs on both sides kept all but a very few hours of direct sunlight from shining down into the

clear but brownish moving water and the rounded river stones that lay far below at the bottom. We tried to get to Leaning Rock at noon when the sun was high.

To get down to, or up from, the swimming spot, one clambered with toe and finger holds on the narrow slices of up-ended strata. Lunch sandwiches were usually consumed above the cliff before descending — or after the swim and the climb — because it was hard to carry anything while scaling those rocks.

In the middle 1930's, when my friend Helen Besaw (now Mrs. Joe Barnoski of Blandford) and I were ten or twelve, we and my brother Bill and some other kids (Peggy and Billy Summer from Norwich Lake or George, Nancy and Kitsy Loomis from Pisgah) would make the hike to Leaning Rock from Norwich Hill, now and then — on a warm summer day. Starting at North Hall, we went up what is now called Cullen Road, past Frank and Olive Clark's (now Snapes) and Giroux' (now Wilkinsons'), under the power line, past Will Moore's fields (now Whittens') where



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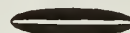
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